

Wichita Daily Eagle

THE MILKY WAY.

Unto the stars I said one night:
"Ye are unhappy, as I deem,
For ye are lonely, lonely bright,
Through boundless space ye roam."
"And oft I fancy that ye go
Like white clouds sailing through the sky,
With myriad virgins glowing low
Their torches in procession high."
"Live ye one ceaseless line of prayer?
Is grief with you an endless woe?
For there are tears of light most fair,
No rays of glory that ye show."
"Oh, ancient stars, that lived and shone
Ere gods or creatures filled the years,
Within your eyes are bitter tears."
They answered me: "We are alone!"
"For each of us is very far
From all her sisters seen by thee;
Our beams no messenger can be
Of what we feel or what we are."
"And cold, unfeeling space devours
The final warmth of every ray."
I said: "I know what ye would say,
For ye are like those souls of ours."
"For they, like you, with friendly light
Their sisters seem to warm and bright,
Yet in eternal loneliness
They burn in silence and in night."
—From the French of Frobenius.

A WITCH BEWITCHED.

A water lily fell at Mona's feet. She knew quite well what it meant. She knew whose boat was coming around the bend in the river, but she did not stir nor look up. She was leaning against the oak tree at the water's edge, and idly picking pieces of a spray of goldenrod. The sunbeams shined through the trees and flickered over the dusky head, slipped down past the lowered lashes, and kissed the dimples on the bare elbows. The oars in the water ceased their regular pluck and the boat glided up to where she stood. The bits of goldenrod floated on each side.

"An' Mona, did ye have no greetin' for me? Why did ye come?"

Mona dropped the last scrap of flowers and looks at him.

"Is it that you think I have come here to you?" she laughs. "Gerald, sure ye don't think that?"

"And why not?" he says, in an injured way. "I told ye Sunday I was going to the Shallows; didn't I ask ye this to some down?"

"Perhaps," she says, "I have forgot. I came down to pick the moss. 'Tis busy I am."

So she flashes one glance at him and picks up her basket, as yet empty.

"Gerald, why, Mona," he says, "come, get ye into the boat. This creek is not half so lush as some a bit further. Come on," he urges.

Mona hesitates and swings the basket up and down. Back across the green slope of land she looks, across the stile and just beyond the hill, where a faint film of smoke creeps up curling from the little chimney barely visible.

Gerald follows her gaze. "Come, Mona," he says. "They won't miss ye."

"Well," she says slowly, "well." In reality she is longing to go, but of course it would not do to let him see it. "Ye needn't help me. I can get in."

Lightly he dips his oars, and they glide down the river. Mona laughs.

"They will be after me soon," she says. "Aunt Mollie will be a-calling me, but she won't know; will she, Gerald?"

"No, calling," answers Gerald in delight at the smiling face she turns to him. He rests his oars in the carolocks and lets the boat drift.

"Mona," he says, bending toward her, "Mona, listen."

"An' won't I catch it, too?" she says with a peal of laughter, as though catching it would be a festive occasion.

"Here's the place, ye Gerald!"

"Ye," he answered merrily. "Wait, I'll get the stuff ye need to move."

She catches hold of the bending branch of willow and draws the boat close to shore. One small bare foot swings back and forth in the water as she balances herself on the prow and looks softly to herself. She knows she is angry, she guesses what he had started to say to her a moment ago; but what does she care for that? The lips are demure and serious as she thanks him, but the violet eyes are laughing.

"Gerald," she says when the oars commenced to move, "Aileen's here."

"Yes," she has the chance to see us now while Lady Lindores is at home. She is still my lady's maid, ye know, Aileen is, and it's myself would like to be in her place."

"Mona, ye would like to go away from—Kilgarnock?"

"Yes," she cries, "surely."

The boat's keel ran up to the landing place. She jumped out and then turned away with the basket in her hand. One glance she gave him over her shoulder.

"An' would ye care, Gerald, if I should be after ye?" he said to himself as he watched the little figure trip up the greenward and over the stile.

He forgot about the fishing expedition he had planned. He leaned back in the boat and fell to thinking. All the while the world was not yet succeeded; there are still some few left to tangle up the senses of a man and leave him in bewilderment. The witch in Kilgarnock must have taken up her abode in Mona. Care's small head. To torment the lads of the village, to beguile and capture each unsuspecting heart, were accomplishments in which long practice had made her perfect. There seemed such a sunny atmosphere always around her that it made her as dangerous as she was lovable and winning.

Unlucky Gerald! All her life he had known her, even back to the time when she had begun to talk in broken baby phrases.

Although he was years older than she, Mona treated him in the same careless, laughing way in which she did all the other suitors. And though not one of them could boast of any special mark of favor, yet each one believed himself to be ahead in the race—each one except Gerald Shearn. Daily he questioned himself, tried to understand her, "but no," he thought bitterly, "it's an omahoun I am. She laughs at me."

With all the love of his passionate Irish nature he loved the maid, respected pretty slims, who would look at him so roguishly from under long lashes and would not listen. And now he heard her voice calling: "Lightfoot, Lightfoot, come up, come up; come to me, acushla!" and the tinkle of the cowbell echoed back again. He pictured her sitting on the little stool and milking the cow; he knew how she would look—he had often watched her. The sleeves of her frock would be pushed up over her round arm; the dark rings of her hair would be loosely over her head and that against the curls would be the cow's side. He imagined he could hear her talking and cooing to old Lightfoot, who seemed to him so unresponsive.

He remembered Aileen. She and Mona were about the same age, but so unlike in appearance that kinship would have never been suspected. While Mona was rather below the average height, Aileen was above it; Mona's hair was black as midnight, and Aileen's a bronze gold. It had been a proud moment to them all when Lady Lindores sent for Aileen to come to the "big house," as the tenants all termed the great stone mansion, and

prouder still when my lady made known her wishes that Aileen should accompany her as maid.

Not a throb of jealousy quickened Mona's pulses at Aileen's good fortune. She rejoiced with her cousin, and was unfeignedly glad. And now my Lord and Lady Lindores were home for the winter after a year of absence, and Aileen was back once more in the home of her childhood. With tears of delight her mother and Mona greeted the traveler, her father surveyed her with complacent pride and approval; to them she was more beautiful than ever.

The month drew to a close. The "big house" would soon be empty again and silent. The days had been busy ones; new cottages had been erected, new barns and buildings; the wide estate had been refenced and improved. And now all would be quiet till winter, when it was expected that the mansion would be filled with a merry crowd of guests, and the logs would blaze on the hearths, making Christmas cheer.

My lord and lady, alike beloved by their people, had been planning some amusement for them as an appropriate and welcome wind up of the work. The wide new barn seemed particularly adapted for the purpose, and Lord Lindores announced that here he would give a dance and bountiful supper.

Mona slipped down to the river in gleam at the good news. Aileen had just brought her. She swung herself up to a limb that reached half way over the water, and scrambled recklessly out upon it till the bough swung.

"Gerald!" she called eagerly down the river. "Hi, Gerald!"

He was not in sight, but she thought he would probably be just around the bend fishing. In one moment the familiar faded boat came swinging around.

"Come here, Gerald, just as quick as ye can!" she calls, quivering with excitement and splashing the water below with impatient heels.

"Gerald," he answers, "Shure, Mona, what is it? Is the cow after dyin'?" Or the pigs stole? Tell it, colleen."

"The cow?" she says, her eyes dancing. "Oh, Gerald, it's me I can't kape still long enough to spake wid me tongue. The dance we're goin' to have in the new barn to-morrow night; ye didn't know that now? I have come just to tell ye it."

"And is that all?" says Gerald as he rests his oars and looks at her surprised. "An' I thought, Mona, ye had a thing to tell, and stand the news. A big bit I lost, for when ye called so fast I didn't bid to finish."

"Well, ain't ye glad now, Gerald, for me to tell you?"

"Faith, I knew that same already. It was no news to me, Mona."

Mona's red lips pouted.

"Go back the Gerald, to your fishin'; 'tis not for me to bother ye."

Gerald surveyed her with an odd expression on his face.

"Look, Mona," he said, drawing a little bundle from the pocket of his corduroy trousers. "See what I am goin' to ask the purtiest gurl in Kilgarnock to wear to-morrow night. And he carefully unrolled a wide pink silk handkerchief and held it up for Mona's inspection. The little maid clasped her hands in admiration. She had nothing like it, and never doubted that it was intended for her.

"The beautiful shawl, Gerald."

He craned his neck around to one side to behold the kerchief from her point of view.

"Yes," he said calmly, and then folded it up very carefully in its tissue wrappings, and put the bundle back into his pocket.

"Goodby, Mona," he called, bending over his oars again.

She did not answer, but stared blankly at the little boat till it disappeared.

"Indeed, thin, I don't care if it's not for me. I wouldn't have it," she said, her head and speaking emphatically. "I wouldn't have it at all, at all."

She climbed over her perch a little more slowly than she had mounted it, and began to sing a gay little carol. A bird in the tree caught the notes and burst into responsive song. Mona ceased suddenly.

"Oh, hush, ye bird!" she cried, indignance in her voice, and then as she turned to go deliberately pushed a helpless little frog into the water.

When the next evening came the barn was full of life and laughter. As Mona with her circle and aunt entered the little yard gate the plank-plink-plank of the violins came floating out to them, mingled with the shuffling of many feet.

"Oh, make haste!" she whispered to herself, and could not keep her feet in the sober step that suited her aunt's mincing. The lanterns hung down from the doorway and windows, wide flags floated from the roof, and streamers and folds of bunting swept across the walls and ceiling inside.

Mona had spent an hour about the adornment of her small person, but she need not have lingered. There were many feet besides her own, many other dresses old besides hers. Around her neck was a string of yellow beads, and a yellow sash of Aileen's adorned her waist.

They pushed their way to a seat, and Aunt Mollie, fanned herself vigorously. Aileen looked on with interest. There was Maggie Tully and Annie Kavanagh. All these girls, as well as the lads, were on hand, but where was Aileen? She had said she was coming. Mona looked in one direction and then another, and at last there sat Aileen close to her, and nearly stood Gerald, gazing at her. Mona turned a little pale. She did not see Patsy and Barney and Farron edging up to her; she never even thought of any of them. In her eagerness to make no mistake she stood up on the toes to look at the lads. Yes, it was Aileen, and now Gerald was leading her out to dance. The pink silk kerchief was round her neck. Something seemed to shoot across Mona's eyes with a blinding pain. When Barney begged her to dance she answered a little sharply, and he went away again. "It is too warm here, aunt, just now," she said to Mrs. Kelly.

"Go stand in the cool a while, child," said Mrs. Kelly. "There's Aileen coming over here; hide a bit."

But Mona was gone. Not under the trees did she stop, not by the little gate. Swiftly she moved on the side way, over the dusky road and into her own yard. Here she paused a moment, and catching her breath with something that sounded like a gasp passed across the tiny thatched hut, and so over the stile to the river. Down on her face upon the grass she threw herself, careless of the yellow sash of which she had been so proud; the yellow beads burst their string and some rolled down the bank into the river. She lay very still and quiet, so quiet that a nightingale gave her no heed and began to sing. A whip-poorwill called on the opposite bank, and far off in the woods came the answer of his mate. The gleaming moon rolled slowly into view and shivered each branch and blossom.

The birds sang on, but Mona heard them not. She was thinking—she heard on the heart that beat so fast—the other arm pillowing her head. She did not try to analyze her feelings; she knew she had never known how. There was a dull ache in her breast, and memory was torturing her.

"Holy mother," she began whispering, and could get no further. "She will not help me now. I am too bad, too bad at all."

She thought how unkindly she had allowed herself to be treated. She had laughed then to herself.

"Oh, werra, werra," she ejaculated, and now Aileen had taken him. It was Aileen's fault, not Gerald's. How could she do this

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The slow tears trickled down her cheeks and glistened upon the grass like diamonds. The moonlight lay over the prostrate figure in broken patches. Gently the breeze lifted and fell again each dark ring of silky hair curling over her head and down to the white neck that shone all the whiter. The moon reached the middle of her jeweled crown. The nightingale sang, all unconscious of the silent girl beneath him. The larks lay over her flushed cheek like a dark shadow; in very weariness and worn out with her misery she had fallen asleep.

The bird at last hushed his sweet treble and flew away. He had heard a hasty step over the grass. But Mona heard not, saw not. Somebody came down to the river bank almost on a run, and stopped short at sight of the little figure lying there so motionless. He knelt down beside her. With a quick eye Gerald noted the tear stained cheeks, the pallid lips, whence came a long drawn sobbing breath.

Without a word he gathered her up in his arms, asleep as she was, but Mona stirred and then started from him wide awake.

"—You—oh, Gerald!"

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"Don't," she whispered, trying to remember her resolution. "I will go back now." She stood up and then swayed a little, dizzy.

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She struggled to release herself and stood back from him pitifully defiant.

"Ye shall not touch me!" she cried. "Go back to Aileen. Go back to her and spake your words to her. I have said same to ye. She will believe ye. Let me to-morrow night; ye didn't know that now? I have come just to tell ye it."

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"Indeed, thin, I don't care if it's not for me. I wouldn't have it," she said, her head and speaking emphatically. "I wouldn't have it at all, at all."

She climbed over her perch a little more slowly than she had mounted it, and began to sing a gay little carol. A bird in the tree caught the notes and burst into responsive song. Mona ceased suddenly.

"Oh, hush, ye bird!" she cried, indignance in her voice, and then as she turned to go deliberately pushed a helpless little frog into the water.

When the next evening came the barn was full of life and laughter. As Mona with her circle and aunt entered the little yard gate the plank-plink-plank of the violins came floating out to them, mingled with the shuffling of many feet.

"Oh, make haste!" she whispered to herself, and could not keep her feet in the sober step that suited her aunt's mincing. The lanterns hung down from the doorway and windows, wide flags floated from the roof, and streamers and folds of bunting swept across the walls and ceiling inside.

Mona had spent an hour about the adornment of her small person, but she need not have lingered. There were many feet besides her own, many other dresses old besides hers. Around her neck was a string of yellow beads, and a yellow sash of Aileen's adorned her waist.

They pushed their way to a seat, and Aunt Mollie, fanned herself vigorously. Aileen looked on with interest. There was Maggie Tully and Annie Kavanagh. All these girls, as well as the lads, were on hand, but where was Aileen? She had said she was coming. Mona looked in one direction and then another, and at last there sat Aileen close to her, and nearly stood Gerald, gazing at her. Mona turned a little pale. She did not see Patsy and Barney and Farron edging up to her; she never even thought of any of them. In her eagerness to make no mistake she stood up on the toes to look at the lads. Yes, it was Aileen, and now Gerald was leading her out to dance. The pink silk kerchief was round her neck. Something seemed to shoot across Mona's eyes with a blinding pain. When Barney begged her to dance she answered a little sharply, and he went away again. "It is too warm here, aunt, just now," she said to Mrs. Kelly.

"Go stand in the cool a while, child," said Mrs. Kelly. "There's Aileen coming over here; hide a bit."

But Mona was gone. Not under the trees did she stop, not by the little gate. Swiftly she moved on the side way, over the dusky road and into her own yard. Here she paused a moment, and catching her breath with something that sounded like a gasp passed across the tiny thatched hut, and so over the stile to the river. Down on her face upon the grass she threw herself, careless of the yellow sash of which she had been so proud; the yellow beads burst their string and some rolled down the bank into the river. She lay very still and quiet, so quiet that a nightingale gave her no heed and began to sing. A whip-poorwill called on the opposite bank, and far off in the woods came the answer of his mate. The gleaming moon rolled slowly into view and shivered each branch and blossom.

The birds sang on, but Mona heard them not. She was thinking—she heard on the heart that beat so fast—the other arm pillowing her head. She did not try to analyze her feelings; she knew she had never known how. There was a dull ache in her breast, and memory was torturing her.

"Holy mother," she began whispering, and could get no further. "She will not help me now. I am too bad, too bad at all."

She thought how unkindly she had allowed herself to be treated. She had laughed then to herself.

"Oh, werra, werra," she ejaculated, and now Aileen had taken him. It was Aileen's fault, not Gerald's. How could she do this

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And wear his kerchief—the prettiest girl in Kilgarnock—those were his words, and now she knew what he had meant. Oh, why had not Aileen staid away! And now Gerald was gone from her entirely. Slowly she made up her mind that she would be true. No one, not Aileen nor Gerald, should ever know the truth. Gerald should never know she was sorry now, and so he would be happy. She murmured in a farewell in soft Irish words, "Gerald, adonm na Gerald."

The slow tears trickled down her cheeks and glistened upon the grass like diamonds. The moonlight lay over the prostrate figure in broken patches. Gently the breeze lifted and fell again each dark ring of silky hair curling over her head and down to the white neck that shone all the whiter. The moon reached the middle of her jeweled crown. The nightingale sang, all unconscious of the silent girl beneath him. The larks lay over her flushed cheek like a dark shadow; in very weariness and worn out with her misery she had fallen asleep.

The bird at last hushed his sweet treble and flew away. He had heard a hasty step over the grass. But Mona heard not, saw not. Somebody came down to the river bank almost on a run, and stopped short at sight of the little figure lying there so motionless. He knelt down beside her. With a quick eye Gerald noted the tear stained cheeks, the pallid lips, whence came a long drawn sobbing breath.

Without a word he gathered her up in his arms, asleep as she was, but Mona stirred and then started from him wide awake.

"—You—oh, Gerald!"

"—You are all about for ye," he answered. "Ye have scared the heart av me. An' why did ye come down here?"

"Don't," she whispered, trying to remember her resolution. "I will go back now." She stood up and then swayed a little, dizzy.

"Mona, mavourneen!" said Gerald, holding her close.

She struggled to release herself and stood back from him pitifully defiant.

"Ye shall not touch me!" she cried. "Go back to Aileen. Go back to her and spake your words to her. I have said same to ye. She will believe ye. Let me to-morrow night; ye didn't know that now? I have come just to tell ye it."

"And is that all?" says Gerald as he rests his oars and looks at her surprised. "An' I thought, Mona, ye had a thing to tell, and stand the news. A big bit I lost, for when ye called so fast I didn't bid to finish."

"Well, ain't ye glad now, Gerald, for me to tell you?"

"Faith, I knew that same already. It was no news to me, Mona."

Mona's red lips pouted.

"Go back the Gerald, to your fishin'; 'tis not for me to bother ye."

Gerald surveyed her with an odd expression on his face.

"Look, Mona," he said, drawing a little bundle from the pocket of his corduroy trousers. "See what I am goin' to ask the purtiest gurl in Kilgarnock to wear to-morrow night. And he carefully unrolled a wide pink silk handkerchief and held it up for Mona's inspection. The little maid clasped her hands in admiration. She had nothing like it, and never doubted that it was intended for her.

"The beautiful shawl, Gerald."

He craned his neck around to one side to behold the kerchief from her point of view.

"Yes," he said calmly, and then folded it up very carefully in its tissue wrappings, and put the bundle back into his pocket.

"Goodby, Mona," he called, bending over his oars again.

She did not answer, but stared blankly at the little boat till it disappeared.

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